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MEETING

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Chairman: Mr. Radha Krishna RAMPHUL  
(Mauritius).

AGENDA ITEM 36 (continued)

Reservation exclusively for peaceful purposes of the sea-bed and the ocean floor, and the subsoil thereof, underlying the high seas beyond the limits of present national jurisdiction and use of their resources in the interests of mankind, and convening of a conference on the law of the sea: report of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of the Sea-Bed and the Ocean Floor beyond the Limits of National Jurisdiction (A/8721 and Corr.1, A/C.1/L.621, 622, 632 and 633.

1. The CHAIRMAN: I have been requested to inform the Committee that Niger has joined the list of sponsors of draft resolution A/C.1/L.632.

2. I also wish to announce that the list of speakers on the declaration of the Indian Ocean as a zone of peace will be closed at 6 p.m. today.

3. Mr. OGISO (Japan): I wish at the outset very briefly to associate myself with those previous speakers who have spoken so highly of the Ambassador of Sri Lanka, under whose brilliant chairmanship the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of the Sea-Bed and the Ocean Floor beyond the Limits of National Jurisdiction has made steady progress in preparing for the conference on the law of the sea. The elaborate report of the sea-bed Committee [A/8721 and Corr.1] now before us is illustrative of the dedicated efforts made by the members and officers of the sea-bed Committee as well as its secretariat.

4. Indeed, my delegation, like many others, is gratified to note that useful accomplishments were attained by the sea-bed Committee at its two sessions held this year, particularly at the summer session in Geneva, which succeeded, among other things, in producing in Sub-Committee II the list of subjects and issues relating to the law of the sea [*ibid.*, para. 23]. My delegation attaches no less

importance to the painstaking efforts of the working group of Sub-Committee I to work out draft treaty articles on the future régime for the international sea-bed area. My delegation is convinced that those accomplishments constitute an important step forward in preparations for the conference on the law of the sea.

5. However, we all know that a tremendous amount of work, including the establishment of more working groups, is still needed between now and the conference on the law of the sea. We can hardly over-estimate the importance of making sufficient progress in the preparatory work, such as the drafting of treaty articles, which is, indeed, a prerequisite for the success of the conference. Therefore, my delegation, for its part, pledges itself to continued active participation in the work of the sea-bed Committee in searching for compromise solutions to a number of difficult issues involved in the preparatory work for the conference on the law of the sea.

6. Having said that much, may I now turn to some of the specific points my delegation considers deserving of special attention at the present stage of our deliberations.

7. First, as to the schedule of work related to the forthcoming conference on the law of the sea, my delegation, like many others, finds it acceptable that two further sessions of the sea-bed Committee be held in 1973, one in the spring and the other in the summer, totalling not less than 13 weeks, as recommended in paragraph 26 of the report of that Committee. In this connexion my delegation feels that at its next session the General Assembly should fully review the report of the sea-bed Committee on the work of those two sessions in 1973, and, in the event that progress has been insufficient to warrant the holding of the substantive session of the conference in 1974, the General Assembly might consider postponement of the substantive session of the conference scheduled for 1974. As to the organizational session of the conference to be held in the course of the twenty-eighth session of the General Assembly, although we initially entertained some doubt as to the practicability of such a schedule, we no longer object to it if the substantive session of the conference could be held in 1974. Moreover, my delegation concurs with the view that certain arrangements should be considered for a further session of the conference.

8. Next, as regards the venue of the forthcoming conference, my delegation welcomes the offer of the Chilean Government for the holding of the substantive session of 1974 in Santiago and also the offer made by the Government of Austria to invite the holding of a further session of the conference in Vienna, which we hope will also receive widespread support.

9. I now wish to express my delegation's sympathy for another important draft resolution, that contained in document A/C.1/L.632 of 27 November 1972, introduced by the representative of Singapore at the 1904th meeting. My delegation finds much merit in that draft resolution. No one can possibly doubt the motivation of the sponsors when they claim that they are really in need of reliable information and basic data to draw up a clear and over-all picture of the future international régime and machinery of the sea-bed area and its resources. It has been pointed out by some delegations that too many financial implications or technical difficulties will be involved in such a study by the United Nations Secretariat. My delegation believes that, on the contrary, it would be wrong to discourage that kind of well-meaning attempt because the information obtained through such a study, even if of a modest scale, will prove to be of some use for our future deliberations in view of the meagre knowledge of the world community of matters relating to the sea-bed. If past studies proved to be lacking in precise information, there is even stronger reason for conducting elaborate research to fill the gap in our knowledge. Nothing would be more valuable than reliable scientific knowledge and information as we embark on this historic attempt to define and solve problems pertaining to the last frontier left on this planet.

10. That is all I wished to state at this stage, but my delegation reserves its right to make further comments on specific issues, as the need arises, at future meetings of this Committee.

11. The CHAIRMAN: Members of the Committee no doubt know that Mr. Ogiso is Chairman of the Fifth Committee, the Committee that deals with finances. I feel honoured by the participation of my colleague in the deliberations of our Committee.

12. I avail myself of Mr. Ogiso's presence among us to repeat what I have already stated on several previous occasions, which is that unless the First Committee concludes its work on 8 December, it will be very difficult for the Fifth Committee to consider the financial implications of any draft that we may adopt at the last minute. I hope that members will bear this in mind and do their best to co-operate with the Chairman.

*The meeting rose at 11.25 a.m.*